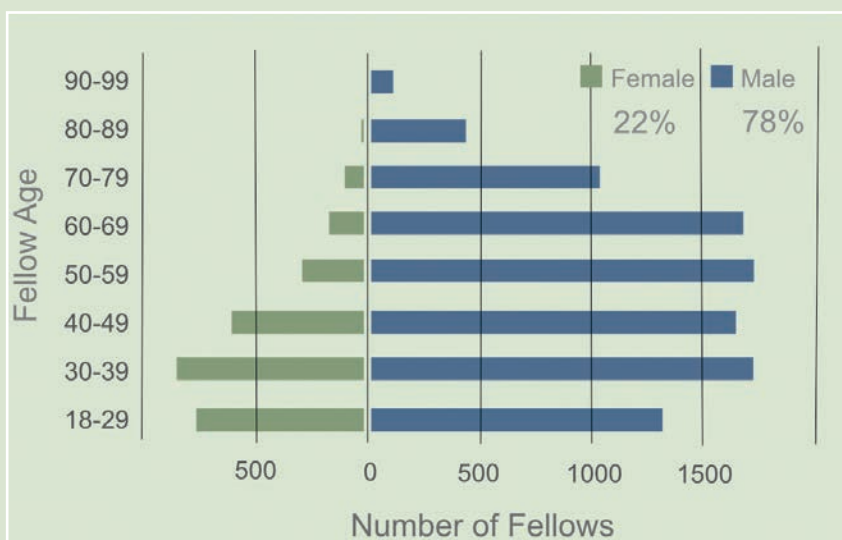


SOCIETY NEWS

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE SOCIETY'S STRATEGIC OPTIONS REVIEW



Membership Demographics: Gender and age distribution

The Society’s President, Mike Daly, recently reported that a ‘Strategic Options Review’ was underway to ‘consider our future direction and specifically the relevance of our science and membership programmes’ (Geoscientist 30(7), 16-19, 2020). Megan O’Donnell and Richard Hughes report on the outcomes of that review and the directions our Society will take.

Emerging challenges

Membership numbers have been in decline since their peak in 2017, and some demographics and marginalised groups are underrepresented. There is a perception that the Society has not kept up to date with emerging trends in the Earth sciences, and has a reputation for traditionalism and exclusivity that acts as a barrier to some.

Record low enrolments in Earth science degree programmes suggest a decreasing popularity of our science, and evidence suggests that the Society is falling out of favour with the next generation of Earth scientists, who communicate and network differently to their predecessors.

Strategic objectives

Over the past several months, a team of Society staff working with pro bono support from an international consultancy firm and extensive stakeholder input, sought to review and recommend the ways in which our Society could strengthen itself against these challenges. In September, the Society’s Council agreed upon four key strategic objectives aimed at bringing new focus to the science programme, strengthening our existing professional development and education work, tackling diversity challenges and catalysing progress on key operational fronts.

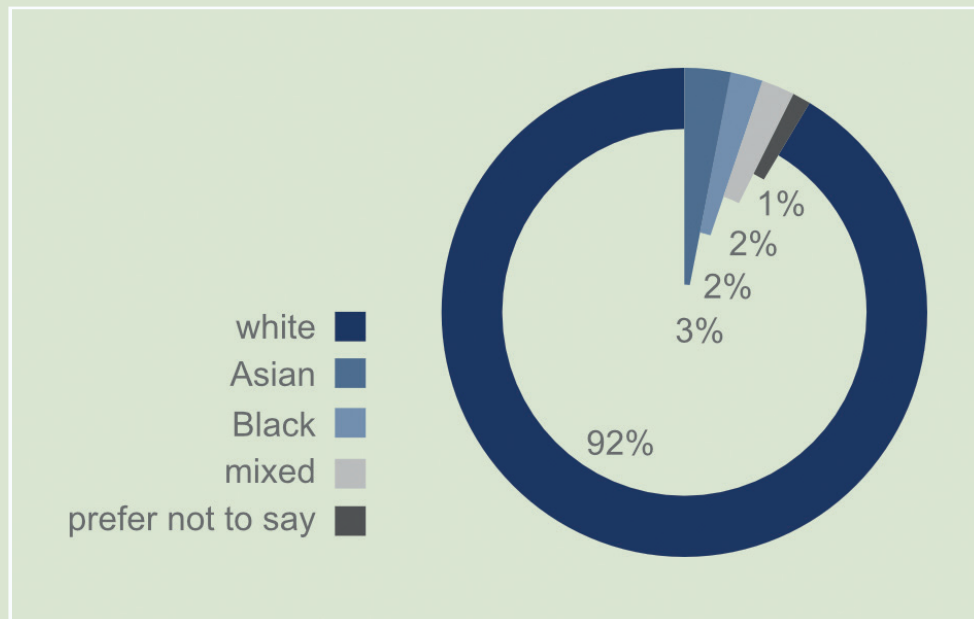
1. Advance multidisciplinary Earth science to inform global issues

In order to offer a high-profile and relevant science program that connects our members across key societal issues, drives innovation, investment and

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What your society is doing at home and abroad



Membership Demographics: Ethnicity

collaboration, and informs public debate, the Society will bring new focus to five key science themes: geohazards, geoengineering and georesilience; climate & environmental change; the energy & materials transition; planetary science; and digital & technological innovation in the Earth sciences.

2. Support professional development, careers and education in Earth science

Advocating for the Earth sciences and communicating the societal relevance of the discipline to prospective students will be integral to fostering a diverse, inclusive and high-calibre future generation of experts. Stronger links with academic institutions will be key, supporting educators, researchers and technicians by offering an accessible Society membership structure for all.

The Society recognises its pivotal role in supporting the education and development of Earth scientists across the breadth of the education spectrum. Its unique position as the accreditor of degree courses, as well as the sole offering body for professional qualifications such as Chartered Geologist, provides a strong basis upon which to guide the subject and its practitioners to excellence at every stage in their career.

3. Be the inclusive and collaborative home for UK Earth scientists, and increase our international orientation

The Society’s membership should reflect the breadth of our community, offering a ‘home’ for every Earth scientist. To do this, we need to establish both mechanisms and initiatives to drive change, and we welcome input from those already active in this area. Deploying an equitable and accessible membership model

is the Society’s greatest priority in this area, and a review and consultation period is underway. Specifically, the Society recognises the need to attract and retain female, Black, Asian, and minority ethnic Earth scientists across the breadth of its membership to claim a truly inclusive and representative community.

4. Become a dynamic and responsive organisation with a strong digital identity

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital solutions at a revolutionary pace. The Society will be challenged to meet its members’ rapidly evolving expectations for virtual conferences, field trips and meetings, digital networking platforms and discussion forums. Prioritising digital solutions that drive member engagement and enable sector-wide participation will be key.

Finally, adopting a consistent and strong visual brand across the Society’s many communication channels will enable the Society to stand out clearly, professionally, and recognisably as the national body.

Optimism

The four strategic priorities outlined above build upon and bring focus to our 2017-27 strategy. They were developed following detailed research, extensive consultation, reflection, and robust discussion. We head towards 2021 with pride in our accomplishments and with great optimism for our future. We hope you will join us on our journey towards a new future for the Society, confident of its place in the Earth sciences ecosystem.